

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5360

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to studying performance and funding of running start students.

Brief Description: Studying performance and funding of running start students.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education (originally sponsored by Senators Brandland, Sheldon, Fairley, Berkey, Delvin, Benson and Rockefeller).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 3/23/05, 4/1/05 [DP].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires a study of the Running Start program by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Kenney, Chair; Sells, Vice Chair; Cox, Ranking Minority Member; Rodne, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Buri, Dunn, Fromhold, Hasegawa, Jarrett, Ormsby, Priest and Roberts.

Staff: Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

Background:

Running Start

In 1990, the Legislature created the Running Start dual-enrollment program as part of the Learning By Choice Act. Running Start provides 11th and 12th-grade students the option of attending courses at participating institutions of higher education for which dual high school and college/university credit is earned. Students must meet entrance criteria established by the participating colleges and universities and may earn the equivalent of up to two academic years of college credit in the program.

Certificate of Academic Achievement

Beginning with the high school graduating class of 2008, high school students must earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA) in order to be eligible to graduate. The CAA is evidence a student has met the state's academic standards in reading, writing, and mathematics

on the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). Beginning in 2010, science will be added as a content requirement of the WASL for earning a CAA.

Summary of Bill:

Within current budgets, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, and the Higher Education Coordinating Board are directed to study student performance on the high school WASL and the subsequent student performance in college-level courses under the Running Start program. The study must include:

- correlations between student scores on the WASL and placement tests used at two-year and four-year colleges and universities;
- correlations between student scores on the WASL, placement tests, and performance in courses taken under Running Start;
- completion rates of courses taken by Running Start students who met the proficiency standard on the WASL; and
- causes for students not completing Running Start courses.

The study also must examine the current Running Start funding formula and include any recommendations for changes to the distribution of funds between school districts and institutions of higher education. The study must be completed by January 15, 2006, and the results will be reported to the Governor, the State Board of Education, and the fiscal and education committees of the Legislature.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (In support) Some school superintendents have reported that students are returning to district high schools after taking college courses and are not prepared to pass the WASL. The initial discussion underlying this bill was around requiring students to pass the WASL in order to participate in Running Start. This is not an anti-Running Start bill; the goal is to make Running Start even better by addressing the 10 percent of students who aren't successful in Running Start courses.

Running Start is an important component of the high school program. We support the concept of passing the WASL before entering Running Start, and also support the gathering of data that would strengthen the program and provide motivation for both the high school WASL and Running Start courses. Ideally we would like to see the Running Start courses offered on the high school campuses.

There is no general agreement about whether passing the WASL should be a requirement for participation in Running Start. But, we do need to be clear about the message we are sending to students about what is expected of them in 10th grade and beyond. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction is interested in building linkages between the K-12 system and higher education. We need to increase alignment of the messages to teachers regarding the importance of WASL passage. Working with higher education will build those linkages, and completing the study will move those conversations forward.

(With concerns) The parents of Running Start students should be included in the study group. It also would be important to clarify that the intent section applies only to public students and not to students receiving home-based instruction.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Senator Brandland, prime sponsor; Don Rash, Association of School Principals; Barbara Mertens, Washington Association of School Administrators; and Bob Butts, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

(With concerns) DiAnna Brannan, Christian Homeschool Network.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.